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ABSTRACT

This paper comprises four case studies that illustrate the State Library of New South Wales' (Australia) commitment to learning. The first section describes a shared learning environment for graduate information studies students that was collaboratively developed by the State Library and the University of Technology, Sydney (Australia). The second section presents the Industry Placement Program, designed to insure students from a wide range of disciplines gain real industry experience relevant to their classroom learning and career interests. The third section covers the library's support for researchers and independent learners, including: five main areas in which clients need assistance, i.e., procedures, research skills, catalogs/indexes, specific subjects/formats, and new services; examples of questions asked by clients; strategies to address these needs; and development and delivery of two courses in research skills offered by the library. The fourth section presents a case study on Infocus, a service that provides students with information for their study of the New South Wales Higher School Certificate curriculum. (MES)

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By: Nikki Kallenberger

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Proceedings

Taking the initiative: Ensuring an educational role for libraries in the information society Stream: Education and information literacy

Nikki Kallenberger

Commitment to Learning

Amongst the values of the State Library of New South Wales is 'commitment to learning'. This is reflected in the Library's mission statement:

> Our mission is to inspire, educate, inform and entertain by providing quality library and information programs to support the cultural, research and educational needs of our clients.

With a commitment to learning, and a mission to educate, the State Library of New South Wales has become increasingly proactive in our educational endeavours. For too long, we, like many libraries, have 'sat back' and waited for harassed students to appear, assignments and questions in hand, deadlines looming. We've helped them find answers and resources, helped them find their way through our stacks and indexes, helped them develop information handling skills ... we've cursed the lecturers and teachers who have set questions that can only be answered by the one article in the one journal that disappeared a week ago and can't quickly be replaced, and we've cheered the ones who've provided challenging but achievable information-based learning experiences. We've watched the focus of the educational process move from teacher-centred to learner-centred, from reading textbooks and taking notes to interacting with resources of all descriptions. We've watched learning move out of schools, colleges and universities into the workplace and other real life situations.

We've watched new terminology find its way into our indexes and catalogues: lifelong learning, flexible learning, situated learning, collaborative learning . . .

and we've played a big role in providing significant learning infrastructure (technology, resources, mentors, research expertise, etc). We've acknowledged that information use is an active process, and that information-seeking behaviour varies from person to person. We've re-designed our service delivery to meet the needs, interests and abilities of individuals. We've collaborated with other libraries to expand our capabilities. We've marketed our services, sought feedback from our clients, and on the basis of that feedback, designed and developed new approaches to information provision.

But all along, with respect to our mission to educate, we've really been working from the sidelines, not on the field of play. Now, at the State Library of New South Wales, we're finding our way onto the playing field, carving out a changing role for libraries in the educative process. The four case studies described in this paper are four ways in which we are ensuring our commitment to learning is more than just words on paper.

Shared Responsibility for Graduate Education

The section that follows has been taken from 'Challenging The Boundaries Of Graduate Education For Information Professionals In Australia: Real World Learning For A Virtual Information World' by Niki Kallenberger (State Library of New South Wales) and Dr Ross J. Todd (University of Technology Sydney), *in publication*.

A shared learning environment for graduate information studies students has been collaboratively developed by the State Library of New South Wales and the University of Technology, Sydney, as a

result of as a Strategic Relationship Agreement signed by the two institutions in May 1999. With a strong professional focus on the development of digital libraries, the subject 'Virtual Information Collections, Resources and Services', is delivered by and at the State Library, so the learning environment and the professional practice environment become one and the same. For the nearly 20 staff from both institutions who have been involved in the initiative, and the nearly 60 students who have completed the course, or are currently enrolled, this collaboration offers an exciting opportunity to embark on a new and rewarding shared learning experience.

Developments in the digital information world and how these were shaping professional information work provided the context for the learning environment, and the focus of the content to be covered. The State Library of New South Wales provided the real 'virtual library' in which this learning could take place. The Library has been involved in the development of digital service delivery for more than 20 years, and has gathered considerable expertise. But it also recognises that there is still much to learn.

The Library has long been committed to professional leadership and has provided diverse education and training opportunities for the profession for many years. The opportunity to be formally involved in the delivery of university-based professional education has enabled the Library to integrate its rich theoretical understanding of virtual information management, ever-increasing practical know-how and educational expertise to create a formal learning experience situated in the real world of the information professional, thereby providing rich opportunities for deep learning. In turn, the Library recognises that the experience will return benefits to itself, as well as to the university and the students involved.

The subject objectives show that the focus on digital information resources and services and virtual collection development and management is set against a backdrop of traditional information resources, services and their management. As stated in the subject outline, the objectives are:
In this subject, students will:

1. *understand and apply client-centred concepts and principles in the management of traditional and digital information resources and services;*
1. *analyse policies, practices, and standards related to content development and management in traditional and digital environments;*
2. *identify and apply principles of service design for virtual information environments;*
3. *critically evaluate contemporary issues in information provision and their implications for content development, selection and management;*
4. *understand key aspects and trends of the information technology infrastructure and their implications for content development and management;*
5. *be able to carry out needs assessment and evaluation of virtual information collections, resources and services.*

In order to situate learning in the practice context of a digital information environment, the subject is delivered on site at the State Library over six Saturdays, from 9.00 am - to 4.00 pm each day. A case study approach is used, providing real world experiences of virtual library management but at the same time elucidating the underpinning theories and principles of virtual information resources, services and their management. Nine content areas provide a focus for the six full day sessions. These are: Making the virtual library happen; Content management; Information design; Enablers and barriers; Technology choices; Funding and resourcing; Communication; Research and evaluation; and Possible futures.

Learning strategies include interactive lectures, workshops, discussions, readings, and group investigations, enabling students to engage actively in the case studies to develop key theoretical frameworks, explore practice realities, and to identify key issues, trends, problems and solutions. Three assessment tasks are specified: a response to a significant issue in virtual information management; a team-based investigation and presentation that centering on a real issue in the virtual information environment; and a learning log, which giving students an opportunity to reflect on their learning, as well as explore in more depth areas of particular interest. The open-ended

nature of the assessment tasks allows students to explore areas of individual interest within the digital information environment, but assessment criteria for each task focuses on demonstrating both indepth conceptual and practice-based understandings of the area being explored, and how these understandings construct appropriate virtual library services.

Note: The subject outline for Virtual Information Collections, Resources and Services can be found at

http://www.uts.edu.au/fac/hss/Departments/DIS/VIC/outline.html

Evaluation conducted at the conclusion of the first semester revealed high levels of satisfaction amongst Library staff involved in delivering the subject, as well as students enrolled in the course. The value to the Library as a whole of an undertaking such as this is difficult to measure. Anecdotally, staff agreed that the need to articulate the whys and wherefores of what one does, and to situate this within broader theoretical and professional frameworks rather than just 'doing' had many benefits. In some cases, involvement in the subject provided a welcome opportunity to rethink the whys and wherefores. The interchange of ideas, the chance for staff who do not normally interact to work together, the questions and feedback from students all contributed to the intangible benefits of the Library's involvement.

Another benefit to the Library was the opportunity to interact with those new to the profession. As one staff member said, 'I think it's good from our institutional point of view that we're involved with people who may or may not work here but will probably have some connection to us somehow further down the track.' The provision of the subject was very much in keeping with the Library's corporate priority to 'provide strong leadership in library and information services through excellence in our own activities'.

Feedback from the students about all aspects of the subject was very positive. The majority of students believed all subject objectives were 'fully' or 'mostly' met, and all students agreed that the subject was well planned, the issues were important, the strategies used were effective and that overall, the subject was successful. Students valued learning 'in the real world' and having the opportunity to see first hand practical, working examples of what they were learning about. Perhaps more importantly, they identified that the opportunity to engage in real world opportunities where they could apply their theoretical understandings to meaningful professional experiences, and at the same time deal with the issues in reflective and evaluative ways, were immensely valuable. The learning leadership of the group mentors in this process was identified as particularly valuable. For the students, learning was seen as both a shared and iterative experience, one of active and ongoing engagement between the world of ideas and the world of practice.

Situated Learning: From Work Experience to Industry Placements

The Industry Placement Program of the State Library of New South Wales is designed to ensure students from a wide range of disciplines gain real industry experience relevant to their classroom learning and career interests. Previous work experience programs tended to be generic and prescriptive training programs from a student's point of view, and consumed large amounts of staff and time resources for minimal returns from the Library's point of view. The move to an Industry Placement Policy has been beneficial to both students and the Library.

The program matches the knowledge, skills, needs and interests of students with a project that furthers the Library's work. Each placement, whether individual or team-based, integrates project objectives and student learning needs into a learning agreement. Students completing a project-based placement will have a clear statement of the learning outcomes they have achieved.

A student who wishes to be considered for a placement completes an *Expression of Interest* form. This helps the student clarify what he/she hopes to gain from an industry placement at the State Library and provides the Library with information about their career and academic interests. The

State Library does not guarantee that an industry placement will be provided as a result of submitting an Expression of Interest, but uses the information thus collected to match students and projects.

Preparation is essential to ensure that placements are productive. Before a placement begins, the student and placement supervisor draw up a learning agreement. The agreement should lists learning objectives, strategies and outcomes and is agreed to by the student, the Library and the academic institution from which the student comes. This preparation can be done either in person, or by phone, fax or email. The Library provides each student with a short induction program, and resources that have been identified in the learning agreement. These may be reports, equipment, or access to staff and industry contacts.

By the start of the placement, the student and supervisor will have agreed on a schedule that allows the student to work towards achieving the agreed learning outcomes. The schedule will include a mid-placement review meeting and a debriefing to evaluate the placement. At the completion of the placement, the State Library provides each student with a statement of the learning outcomes achieved.

Two recent examples of industry placements exemplify the mutual benefits to be gained from this approach. Mary, studying for a Masters in Special Education, Sensory Impairment, at the University of Newcastle, wanted to learn more about how people with a visual disability can access information resources in order to integrate appropriate techniques into her teaching practice. A number of small projects identified by the Library's Disability Access Service were matched with Mary's learning objectives. Following a short induction program Mary set to work locating and evaluating self-voicing Internet browsers; large print and speech shareware and freeware programs; investigated proposed client use of a braille embosser; made site visits to four public libraries with adaptive technology to investigate service issues; and demonstrated adaptive technology at a Web Accessibility workshop. As a result, Mary has expanded her knowledge and skills of information access and provided the Library with an information resource to assist public libraries in providing access to electronic resources. State Library clients and staff will also benefit from the work Mary did.

Fiona, a Bachelor of Arts, Library and Information Sciences student at Charles Sturt University, had significant experience in both schools and libraries, prior to beginning work at the National Library of New Zealand four years ago as a reference librarian. Fiona had specific interests in digital access to information and marketing of new services and products. Her industry placement gave her the opportunity to prepare a marketing plan for the Australian Pictorial Thesaurus, and thus a chance to explore both digital developments and marketing issues in an Australia-wide context. It gave the Library a much-needed marketing plan, which has since been implemented. In her evaluation report, Fiona noted that a project-based placement, such as she experienced, was a particularly stimulating opportunity for students with experience working in libraries. It also gave her a chance to experience the 'real' world:

> 'I now have a greater understanding of the time consuming process that is undertaken in digitising collections, and have an understanding of the actual methods as to how this occurs, and what are some of the problems that can happen - '

The move away from our existing work experience program and the development of an effective industry placement program has not happened overnight, nor without considerable effort, but the gains for both students and the Library are already big enough to assure us we're on the right track.

Lifelong Learning: Support for Researchers and Independent Learners

Clients use the State Library of New South Wales for a wide variety of reasons. Their knowledge of our collections and services and their skills in information use and handling vary just as widely. Many of these clients are students formally enrolled in many different courses. Others describe themselves as students, even though they are not formally enrolled in a course. They may be studying their family's history, a new business opportunity or a particular interest. All these

learners find that to make the most of their research time, they need to learn about the Library in order to work independently and confidently. Assisting clients to become increasingly independent in their use of our services and resources is currently a significant goal for the Library.

The Library's Communicating with Clients Working Group recently identified five main areas in which clients need assistance to become independent users of the Library. These areas are listed here, together with examples of the kind of questions asked by clients who have not used the Library extensively:

- *Assistance with procedures*

Where are the lockers?

How do I get a book from stack?

- *Assistance with research skills*

How do I get started?

What are the best keywords to use in my search?

- *Assistance with catalogues and indexes*

Do you have this book from my course reading list?

I'm looking for a recent interview with Nelson Mandela.

- *Assistance with specific subjects or formats*

Where will I find an atlas?

I need some information about my rights as a tenant.

I want to see *The Sydney Morning Herald* of the day my father was born.

- *Assistance with new services, or changes to existing ones*

What new Internet sites are available in my area of interest?

As clients become more sophisticated in their knowledge and use of the Library's collections and services, and more skilled in the process of research, their needs, of course, change:

- *Assistance with procedures*

How do I clear copyright to use this image in my publication?

How do I acquire a photographic reproduction of a newspaper?

- *Assistance with research skills*

Can you help me identify appropriate databases to use in my research?

How can I confirm the credibility of this source?

- *Assistance with catalogues and indexes*

I understand you have diaries written by soldiers at Verdun. I'd like to read them.

How do I access the Vaughan and Van Manen Chess Collection?

- *Assistance with specific subjects or formats*

I'm looking for images of an actress from the 20's.

Do you have any posters or flyers from the anti-apartheid protests of the early 70's?

- *Assistance with new services, or changes to existing ones*

What new resources in my area of interest has the Library recently acquired?

How can I use the Mitchell Library collect' .s during refurbishment?

The Library employs a number of strategies to address these needs:

- *Signage or physical location devices*

eg, Signage in photocopy areas

Floor plans of State Reference Library

Colour-coding of PCs

- *Print and electronic resources*

eg, Print publications such as *Update*, *What's On*

Internet directory on website

Self-guided tour brochure

- *One-to-one services*

eg, Reference desk services

Roving staff at point of use

- *One-to-many services (ie, courses, workshops and tours)*

eg, Introductory tour

Following trails: Researching History at the State Library of New South Wales

Introduction to Library Research Skills of

Rather than discuss all these strategies, this case study will examine the development and delivery of two of the courses offered by the Library's Education and Training Branch: the *Introduction to Library Research Skills* program offered to secondary and tertiary students and *Following trails: Researching History at the State Library of New South Wales.*

Introduction to Library Research Skills (ILRS)

Designed to introduce students not only to the State Library of New South Wales, but also to researching in a large library, the program is offered to class groups accompanied by a teacher. One of the Library's Education Officers presents the two-hour session, which aims to 'get students started'.

Students are welcomed and given a brief overview of the Library, and then the focus shifts to the research process. We use the six step information skills process of the NSW Department of Education and Training's *Information Skills in the School* (1989), as the basis of our session, as many (but not all) students and teachers are familiar with it. Amongst other activities, students brainstorm sources of information. Given the diversity of our collection at the Library, it's a good opportunity to remind them that valuable information can be found in many other places besides books and the Internet.

Drawing on current research activities the students are engaged in, we model the *defining* step of the process, generating keywords and a search strategy. These keywords are then used as examples when we demonstrate the Library's catalogue and appropriate indexes. Students then move to computers to search the catalogue and indexes themselves. The session ends with a tour

of the Library, including a visit to stack. Seeing even a small bit of our vast storage areas and realising they simply can't browse the shelves like they do in smaller libraries very effectively reinforces the need for a thoughtful research strategy.

Feedback from students is very positive, and nearly all indicate that by the end of the session, they have a clear idea of where to start their research. In reality, most class groups stay on at the Library for the rest of the day, so students get an immediate opportunity to put their learning into practice. Teachers like the program so much that we see them year after year. In fact, we don't promote the program other than by word of mouth, as demand readily exceeds capacity. We charge $16.50 per student, with discounts offered to disadvantaged schools.

Following trails: Researching History at the State Library of New South Wales

Designed with a very different clientele in mind, *Following Trails* was developed in collaboration with the Royal Australian Historical Society, and aims to maximise each participant's effectiveness as a researcher at the State Library of New South Wales. The course is jointly led by one of the Library's Education Officers and a practising historian, and also employs specialist staff from throughout the Library. The course runs for eight three-hour sessions, delivered at fortnightly intervals. A fee of $275 per person is charged.

The course program 'unpacks' the Library collection by collection. Each presenter has a role to play: the subject specialist shares his or her in-depth knowledge of the particular collection, the historian discusses the role such resources can play in the process of historical research, and the librarian/education officer demystifies the process of accessing sometimes difficult to find resources and, with the historian, provides a broader research context. Here's a typical program for the course:

Week 1 Frameworks for historical research

Researching in the State Library of New South Wales

Tour of Mitchell and State Reference Libraries

Week 2 Computer catalogues, printed books card catalogue, scanned card computer catalogue

Week 3 Manuscripts, Australian Joint Copying Project

Week 4 Pictorial resources, newspapers

Week 5 Maps, ephemera

Week 6 Serials, CD-ROMs

Week 7 Internet

Week 8 Research presentations

Participants undertake a research project of their choice, thus giving them a real purpose to put what they're learning about the Library's collections into use. Each session builds on the previous one by sharing the research discoveries (or frustrations) made by members of the group in the intervening week. The course concludes with each participant reporting on both the products and processes of their research.

The response by participants in *Following Trails* has been very positive, as these quotes from participant's course evaluations show:

> *My skills were very limited before the course. I was dependent on the goodwill of the librarians. Thanks to the course I am now aware of resources, locations, a plan of attack and other possibilities to pursue.*

> *I now feel able to take on a research project for my work. This not only gives me confidence, it also stimulates my enthusiasm. Hopefully it might add to my career credibility and status, too. As a by-product I've also started writing some children's historical novels. This would never have occurred to me before the course.*

These two courses are but two ways in which we're trying to meet the needs of lifelong learners. While our secondary students may not come with lifelong learning on their agendas, we hope that by putting our introduction to the State Library of New South Wales into a bigger picture of effective library research, they'll be better equipped to take some of their skills and understandings with them as they move beyond school. But we have plenty of evidence that lifelong learners such as our historians are welcoming the chance to expand their skills and understandings in a new educational environment - and enjoying the rewards this learning brings!

Meeting the Needs of Individuals: Infocus, the HSC Resource Service

Infocus: linking people and information, an innovative service of the State Library of New South Wales, aims to provide students with timely, relevant information for their study of the NSW Higher School Certificate (HSC) curriculum. It is a significant means of serving a very specific group of clients, without the constraints of geography or time.

Developed in collaboration with personnel from school and public libraries, Infocus expands the range of resources available to these students by providing reproductions of resources held by the State Library. These reproductions include journal, magazine and newspaper articles, as well as some of the Library's unique heritage materials such as photographs, ephemera and diaries. With a collection of nearly 5 million items, the Library has much to offer students, as well as their teachers.

Students and teachers alike value the diversity of viewpoints and text types Infocus offers. Infocus resources are drawn from Australian and international sources, and often include items difficult to locate in typical school or public libraries. Although material is specifically selected to support students studying the NSW HSC curriculum, much of it will be useful to senior secondary students studying other courses.

Infocus currently operates a membership-based service for schools, public libraries, TAFE colleges and other organisations. A credit deposit system is offered to members to ensure paperwork is kept to a minimum. All orders, be they from members or casual users of the service, are filled quickly, typically on the same day they are received.

Because all items reproduced by Infocus have been copyright cleared - either through a license agreement with the Copyright Agency Limited or through direct negotiation with relevant copyright holders, member libraries can add Infocus resources to their collections. This feature gives Infocus an edge over inter-library loan document supply schemes.

Infocus will soon deliver all of its services online. Visit the Infocus website at http://infocus.slnsw.gov.au to see the first stage of our online developments. You'll be able to explore the more than 1550 resources Infocus currently offers. At this stage ordering still requires a paper order form and payment by cheque or credit card. However, preparation for full electronic ordering and delivery is well underway, and it is anticipated that many Infocus resources will be available in electronic format by early 2001.

As Infocus services begin to be delivered electronically, we expect contact with HSC students themselves to increase. We will have an opportunity to work more closely with the tens of thousands of HSC students throughout NSW in a way that would otherwise be impossible.

Making the Commitment Tangible

As these four case studies reveal, the State Library of New South Wales is no longer content to sit back when it comes to education. We believe libraries can and should claim a more significant

position in the education sector. Libraries have the skills, resources, understandings and expertise to make a contribution which is of great value to those involved in learning. We know that other libraries share our commitment to learning. While we are finding ways to make this commitment tangible, we know that other libraries are finding other ways to do the same. We're pleased to have shared our initiatives with you, and look forward to hearing about yours.

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